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ABSTRACT

New York state high school principals and superintendents were surveyed regarding their evaluations of the statewide minimum competency testing program for high school graduation. Program data were also supplied by the principals. It was concluded that: (1) 85 percent of eleventh grade students had completed the basic competency test graduation requirements (reading and mathematics); (2) 65 percent of tenth grade students had completed the basic competency test requirements for graduation; (3) for over half of all students who had not completed the requirements, administrative problems were the reason; (4) most public schools and one-half of the private schools offered remedial help to students who failed the tests; (5) most schools administered basic competency tests for the first time to ninth graders; (6) most school administrators felt the standards were appropriate or too low, and favored emphasizing life skills; (7) one half of the administrators would accept passing scores on the Regents tests in lieu of competency test passing scores; (8) many administrators endorsed a statewide minimum standard but felt it should be raised; and (9) many principals did not want the competency tests administered during the Regents examinations period, and wanted to exempt certain handicapped students. (MH)

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A REPORT TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS

ON THE

BASIC COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Summary of Major Findings	1
Introduction	4
Survey Procedures	5
Student Status with Respect to the Testing Requirement	8
Remedial Programs	16
Testing and Graduation Policies	23
Reactions and Comments	27
Appendix	34

Summary of Major Findings

- 85 percent of all eleventh grade students statewide have completed the basic competency test requirement for graduation, which is the passing of the reading and mathematics tests. For public schools, the percentages of students who have completed the requirement range from 63 percent in New York City to 82 percent in other large cities to 95 percent in the remainder of the state. The nonpublic school statewide average is 93 percent.

- 65 percent of all tenth grade students statewide have completed the basic competency test requirement for graduation, which is the passing of all five competency tests. For public schools, the percentages of students who have completed the requirement range from 39 percent in New York City to 47 percent in other large cities to 78 percent in the remainder of the state.

- Approximately 41,000 eleventh grade students and 115,000 tenth grade students throughout the state have not yet completed the competency test requirement. In the opinion of high school principals, more than half of these students have not met the requirement for administrative reasons. For example, they have not yet taken the tests, they were absent on the day of testing, or they have recently

transferred from out-of-state. Roughly another 5 percent of the tenth grade students and 10 percent of the eleventh grade students have not met the requirement because of language difficulties and handicapping conditions. There are no apparent reasons why about one-third of these students -- 14,000 eleventh graders and 43,000 tenth graders -- have not met the requirement.

- Most public schools and about one-half of the nonpublic schools provide special help to students who fail basic competency tests. In most public schools, remedial classes in reading and mathematics are provided in addition to regular classes, and many public schools also report providing special help in regular classes. In the other subjects, the public schools more often provide help within regular classes rather than in additional remedial classes.

- Most schools administer basic competency tests for the first time to ninth grade students, and many more schools do this in January rather than in June. Roughly 25 percent of the public schools administer the tests initially to eighth grade students, mostly in June.

- Most school administrators feel that the standard set by the competency tests is either appropriate or too low. They also show a strong preference for continued use of an adult context, emphasizing "life skills" or "coping skills."

- About one-half of the administrators would accept passing scores on Regents examinations in lieu of passing scores on the competency tests. Scores on statewide achievement examinations are acceptable to nearly the same number, but relatively few feel that scores on commercially-prepared tests or on PEP tests are acceptable.

- Many school administrators endorse the concept of a minimum statewide standard for graduation but feel that the standard should be higher. Many are also interested in limiting the program to the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Some were critical of the writing skills test because of rating difficulties.

- Many high school principals urged that the tests not be given during Regents examination periods because of the administrative problems. Many administrators also feel that selected students with handicapping conditions should be exempt from the testing requirement.

Introduction

It has been five years since the plans for the basic competency testing program were announced and almost three years since the first tests in reading and mathematics were administered to ninth grade students. The program was designed to assure that every student receiving a high school diploma acquires the basic skills and understandings needed by adults in today's world. In effect, the tests establish a minimum standard for graduation from high school in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing skills, civics and citizenship, and practical sciences and health.

Because passing the basic competency tests in reading and mathematics will become a graduation requirement in June 1979, it is necessary at this time to promulgate Commissioner's Regulations under which the program will be administered. This requires that the basic competency testing program be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it is achieving its goals, its impact upon students and schools, and its potential for strengthening the quality of education in New York State. To obtain information for use by the Board of Regents in this evaluation, all high school principals were asked to complete survey forms that called for basic data on tenth and eleventh grade students and programs and solicited reactions and comments. In addition, chief school administrators were asked to provide their reactions and comments on a separate form. The results of the survey are summarized in this report.

Survey Procedures

In February 1978, plans for the basic competency test survey were developed, and these plans were reported to the Board of Regents at their February meeting. Two survey forms were prepared, one for chief school administrators and another for high school principals (see appendix). The forms were reviewed by Department staff, by the District Superintendents' Management Team, and by the Regents' Committee on Elementary, Secondary, and Continuing Education.

During the first two weeks in March, an intensive effort was made to solicit the cooperation of school administrators through correspondence (see appendix) and through personal contacts with key personnel. On March 13, the survey forms were reproduced and packaged and, on the following day, were distributed throughout the state by courier. Distribution to schools located outside of New York City was accomplished by the District Superintendents.

The timetable called for the return of all survey forms by March 31, and about 80 percent had been received at that point. A telephone follow-up was conducted during the subsequent week. Earlier in March the Department had been apprised of a special problem that existed in New York City and in Rochester. In both cities, scoring had not been completed for the tests administered in January 1978. Since a significant amount of data would be lost if schools did not have the results of the latest administration, the return date for these districts was extended

until April 28. Through the special efforts of Dr. Anthony J. Polemeni in New York City and Dr. David N. Weart in Rochester, forms were received from 49 New York City high schools and from all Rochester high schools prior to the cut-off date.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the response rates were 82 percent for high school principals and 96 percent for chief school administrators. It can be seen that an extremely high percentage (more than 90 percent for most community types) of usable responses were received, with two exceptions: public high schools in New York City (44 percent) and nonpublic schools (64 percent). With respect to the latter, almost two-thirds of the unreturned and unusable survey forms were sent to nonregistered high schools, most of which do not choose to administer the basic competency tests to their students.

Survey forms will continue to be received from the New York City high schools so that this report may be updated if necessary. The present report is based on the assumption that the 49 reporting schools are representative of the total population of high schools in New York City.

Table 1

Response Rates: High School Principals

Type of School and Community	Number Sent	Responses		Usable Responses	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public					
New York City	112	52	46	49	44
Large City *	46	42	91	38	83
Small City	61	61	100	61	100
Village/Suburb	291	289	99	287	99
Rural	348	348	100	348	100
Total Public	858	792	92	783	91
Nonpublic					
New York City	222	154	69	135	61
Other	251	183	73	169	67
Total Nonpublic	473	337	71	304	64
COMBINED TOTAL	1,331	1,129	85	1,087	82

Table 2

Response Rates: Chief School Administrators

Type of School and Community	Number Sent	Responses		Usable Responses	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
New York City	1	1	100	1	100
Large City*	7	7	100	6	86
Small City	54	52	96	51	94
Village/Suburb	267	262	98	257	96
Rural	345	334	97	332	96
Total	674	656	97	647	96

*Albany, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, and Yonkers

Student Status with Respect to the Testing Requirement

This section of the report indicates the extent to which the students in grades ten and eleven have been able to satisfy the basic competency testing requirement. It also explores the relative difficulty of the various tests and the reasons given for the failure of students to complete the requirement.

Tables 3 and 4 report the number and percent of the students in grades ten and eleven that have completed the basic competency test requirement in those schools responding to the survey. As expected, the percentages are significantly higher in grade eleven than in grade ten; eleventh grade students have had four opportunities to pass two tests while the tenth grade students have had only two opportunities to pass five tests. For tenth grade students, the New York City and large city public school results (39 and 47 percent) are significantly lower than those of public schools in other types of communities (72 to 79 percent). For the eleventh grade students, the New York City public school results are also low (63 percent) while the large city public school results (82 percent) are closer to those of other types (92 to 95 percent). The nonpublic school results range from 81 to 95 percent.

The relative difficulty of the tests in each subject is illustrated in Table 5. This table shows that students find the reading test the easiest to pass and the civics and citizenship test the most difficult. Only 9 and 7 percent of

Table 3

Number and Percent of Tenth Grade Students
Who Have Completed the Basic
Competency Test Requirement in Responding Schools

Type of School and Community	Number of Students		Percent Completed
	Enrolled	Completed	
Public			
New York City	43,747	16,954	39
Large City	11,239	5,285	47
Small City	22,181	15,987	72
Village/Suburb	114,969	91,080	79
Rural	33,192	26,173	79
Nonpublic			
New York City	15,830	12,807	81
Other	15,478	12,853	83

Table 4

Number and Percent of Eleventh Grade Students
Who Have Completed the
Basic Competency Test Requirement in Responding Schools

Type of School and Community	Number of Students		Percent Completed
	Enrolled	Completed	
Public			
New York City	35,786	22,588	63
Large City	10,386	8,510	82
Small City	20,474	18,905	92
Village/Suburb	106,880	101,727	95
Rural	30,545	29,002	95
Nonpublic			
New York City	15,158	13,999	92
Other	14,960	14,253	95

the tenth and eleventh grade students have not yet passed the reading test; 20 percent of the tenth grade students have not yet passed the civics and citizenship test. In contrast to the results gathered in October 1976, the civics and citizenship test appears to be only slightly more difficult than the test in practical sciences and health.

Table 5

Percent of Tenth and Eleventh Grade Enrollment in Responding Schools Who Have Not Yet Passed the Basic Competency Tests

Test	Percent Not Yet Passed	
	Grade 10	Grade 11
Reading	9	7
Mathematics	14	10
Writing Skills	16	*
Civics and Citizenship	20	*
Practical Sciences and Health	18	*

*not required for graduation

The survey asked principals to determine, for each of their students who have not yet passed the required tests, the reason for this situation. Table 6 indicates the four major categories under which these reasons fall and the percent of students in each category. In both grades, administrative reasons predominate; more than half of the students have not yet passed the tests for

Table 6

Reasons for Tenth and Eleventh Grade Students Having Not Yet Passed the Required Basic Competency Tests

Type of School and Community	Percent of Reasons Given							
	Administrative Reasons		Language Other Than English		Handicapping Conditions		No Apparent Reason	
	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 10	Grade 11
Public								
New York City	46	53	7	8	2	2	45	37
Large City	48	41	4	5	5	9	43	45
Small City	50	54	3	5	7	16	40	25
Village/Suburb	65	49	1	3	4	12	30	36
Rural	93	61	*	*	3	10	4	29
Nonpublic								
New York City	63	74	4	5	3	4	30	17
Other	62	67	3	3	6	6	29	24

*less than .5

these administrative reasons. The vast majority of students have not yet been tested in all of the required subjects either because the tests were not administered by the school or because the student was absent on one of the test dates. Smaller numbers of students are recent arrivals in New York State. Also among the administrative reasons are scoring delays and missing records, although these are relatively insignificant in number.

The table also indicates the percentages of students who, in the judgment of the principal, have been unable to complete the requirement because they have a native language other than English or because they have a handicapping condition as defined in Section 200.1 of the Commissioner's Regulations. In general, these two categories include less than 10 percent of the students who have not yet passed the tests. Of those classified as handicapped, most were designated as mentally handicapped or learning disabled.

Tables 6 also shows the percentages of students for whom there is no apparent reason for not satisfying the requirement other than the students' failure to acquire the skills and understandings measured by the basic competency tests. This is the second largest category of reasons given, with the percentages in the various community types mostly in the 25 to 45 percent range.

Based on the data in Tables 3 through 6, it is possible to estimate the current status of all students in the tenth and eleventh grades. This has been done in Tables 7 and 8. For the state as a whole, it is estimated that roughly 212,000 tenth

grade students (65 percent) have met the competency requirement; an estimated 63,000 (19 percent) have not met the requirement because of administrative reasons; 9,000 (3 percent) because of a language difficulty or a handicapping condition; and 43,000 (13 percent) for no apparent reason. With respect to eleventh grade students statewide, 244,000 students (85 percent) have met the competency requirement; an estimated 22,000 (8 percent) have not because of administrative reasons; 4,600 (2 percent) because of a language difficulty or a handicapping condition; and 14,600 (5 percent) for no apparent reason.

Table 7

Status of Tenth Grade Students Statewide With Respect to Completion of the Basic Competency Test Requirement

Type of School and Community	Statewide Enrollment	Completed Requirement		Have Not Completed Requirement							
				Administrative Reasons		Language Other Than English		Handicapping Condition		No Apparent Reason	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public											
New York City	102,900	40,131	39	28,873	28	4,394	4	1,255	1	28,247	28
Large City	14,800	6,956	47	3,765	25	314	2	392	3	3,373	23
Other	173,100	135,018	78	26,657	15	381	*	1,523	1	9,521	6
Total Public	290,800	182,105	63	59,295	20	5,089	2	3,170	1	41,141	14
Nonpublic											
New York City	19,000	15,390	81	2,274	12	144	1	108	*	1,084	6
Other	17,500	14,525	83	1,844	10	89	1	178	1	864	5
Total Nonpublic	36,500	29,915	82	4,118	11	233	1	286	1	1,948	5
COMBINED TOTAL	327,300	212,020	65	63,413	19	5,322	2	3,456	1	43,089	13

*less than .5

Table 8

Status of Eleventh Grade Students Statewide With Respect to Completion of the Basic Competency Test Requirement

Type of School and Community	Statewide Enrollment	Completed Requirement		Have Not Completed Requirement							
				Administrative Reasons		Language Other Than English		Handicapping Condition		No Apparent Reason	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public											
New York City	77,300	48,699	63	15,159	19	2,288	3	572	1	10,582	14
Large City	13,000	10,660	82	959	7	117	1	211	2	1,053	8
Other	160,400	152,380	95	4,251	3	241	*	962	*	2,566	2
Total Public	250,700	211,739	84	20,369	8	2,646	1	1,745	1	14,201	6
Nonpublic											
New York City	17,800	16,376	92	1,054	6	71	*	57	*	242	1
Other	16,800	15,960	95	563	3	25	*	50	*	202	1
Total Nonpublic	34,600	32,336	93	1,617	5	96	*	107	*	444	1
COMBINED TOTAL	285,300	244,075	85	21,986	8	2,742	1	1,852	1	14,645	5

*less than .5

Remedial Programs

The basic competency testing program emphasizes early identification and remediation of students who have reached the eighth or ninth grade without acquiring the basic competencies. This section of the report describes the extent to which this goal is being realized.

Table 9 shows the number and percent of schools reporting that they provide special help to students who fail a basic competency test. From 81 to 97 percent of the responding public schools in the various community types provide students with special help; about half of the nonpublic schools provide such help.

Table 9

Number and Percent of Responding Schools Providing Special Help to Students Failing Basic Competency Tests

Type of School and Community	Number	Percent
Public		
New York City	42	86
Large City	36	95
Small City	59	97
Village/Suburb	268	93
Rural	283	81
Nonpublic		
New York City	66	49
Other	72	43

The procedures used by the responding schools to provide remedial help in each of the five subjects is summarized in Tables 10 through 14. In reading and mathematics, it is most common to provide remedial classes in addition to regular classes. The practice of providing special help in the students' regular classes runs a close second, while other approaches are seldom used. In the remaining subjects, the trend is reversed; it is more common to give remedial help in regular classes in the areas of writing skills, civics and citizenship, and practical sciences and health.

Although there are bilingual programs funded under Title VII and Title I at the secondary level, these programs are not specifically designed for students who have failed a basic competency test. High school bilingual programs as well as those in the elementary school offer major subjects in the students' native language in addition to special classes in English as a second language. The latter, however, do not provide content area instruction.

Table 10

Procedures Used to Provide Special Help to Students Failing the Basic Competency Test in Reading

Type of School and Community	Remedial Help in Regular Classes		Remedial Classes Instead of Regular		Remedial Classes in Addition to Regular		Tutoring		All Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	19	39	9	18	37	76	7	14	0	0
Large City	17	45	1	3	31	82	1	3	3	8
Small City	29	48	12	20	38	62	3	5	3	5
Village/Suburb	137	48	47	16	205	71	15	5	11	4
Rural	123	35	42	12	197	57	13	4	5	1
Nonpublic										
New York City	32	24	3	2	33	24	5	4	3	2
Other	39	23	5	3	30	18	5	3	2	1

Table 11

Procedures Used to Provide Special Help to Students Failing the Basic Competency Test in Mathematics

Type of School and Community	Remedial Help in Regular Classes		Remedial Classes Instead of Regular		Remedial Classes in Addition to Regular		Tutoring		All Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	18	37	11	22	36	74	7	14	2	4
Large City	18	47	5	13	23	61	3	8	3	8
Small City	27	44	13	21	28	46	3	5	3	5
Village/Suburb	138	48	51	18	167	58	15	5	17	6
Rural	139	40	41	12	164	47	13	4	6	2
Nonpublic										
New York City	30	22	2	1	36	27	6	4	3	2
Other	40	24	6	4	28	17	5	3	2	1

Table I2

Procedures Used to Provide Special Help to Students Failing the Basic Competency Test in Writing Skills

Type of School and Community	Remedial Help in Regular Classes		Remedial Classes Instead of Regular		Remedial Classes in Addition to Regular		Tutoring		All Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	17	35	7	14	10	20	3	6	2	4
Large City	19	50	1	3	6	16	0	0	3	8
Small City	31	51	6	10	11	18	2	3	2	3
Village/Suburb	158	55	22	8	77	27	12	4	11	4
Rural	120	34	20	6	67	19	10	3	4	1
Nonpublic										
New York City	30	22	3	2	19	14	4	3	2	1
Other	36	21	4	2	15	9	7	4	3	2

Table 13

Procedures Used to Provide Special Help to Students Failing the Basic Competency Test in Civics and Citizenship

Type of School and Community	Remedial Help in Regular Classes		Remedial Classes Instead of Regular		Remedial Classes in Addition to Regular		Tutoring		All Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	5	10	5	10	1	2	4	8	1	2
Large City	19	50	1	3	3	8	1	3	3	8
Small City	24	39	6	10	13	21	2	3	3	5
Village/Suburb	133	46	28	10	67	23	9	3	11	4
Rural	113	32	12	3	43	12	7	2	5	1
Nonpublic										
New York City	20	15	2	1	14	10	3	2	2	1
Other	29	17	1	1	11	7	6	4	6	4

Table 14

Procedures Used to Provide Special Help to Students Failing the Basic Competency Test in Practical Sciences and Health

Type of School and Community	Remedial Help in Regular Classes		Remedial Classes Instead of Regular		Remedial Classes in Addition to Regular		Tutoring		All Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	7	14	4	8	0	0	3	6	1	2
Large City	19	50	1	3	3	8	1	3	4	11
Small City	19	31	4	7	10	16	1	2	2	3
Village/Suburb	112	39	20	7	60	21	9	3	12	4
Rural	100	29	11	3	37	11	9	3	4	1
Nonpublic										
New York City	18	13	2	1	15	11	3	2	2	1
Other	28	17	1	1	9	5	5	3	4	2

Testing and Graduation Policies

This section reports on school policies regarding the grades in which the basic competency tests are first administered and the use of the January and June examination periods. It also describes credit requirements for the local diploma and the issuance of certificates.

Table 15 shows, for the schools responding to the survey, the grade and month in which students are administered the basic competency tests for the first time. Except in the large cities other than New York, well over half of the schools begin testing their students in January of the ninth grade. This is more common among the nonpublic schools than among the public schools, where large numbers of school districts have elected to test at the end of grade 8. With each administration, more public schools are moving toward an initial testing in the eighth grade.

Most schools designate January as the main testing period (Table 16), using June for "makeups" and retesting. Except in New York City, fewer than 3 percent of the public schools limit their testing to a single period per year, either January or June. However, more than one-third of the nonpublic schools test only once each year, with the greatest number testing only in January.

Information available in the Department indicates that very few schools require more than the basic minimum requirement of 16 units, exclusive of physical education, for a local

Table 15

Grade and Month in Which Students Are Administered the Basic Competency Tests for the First Time

Type of School and Community	Grade 8				Grade 9				All Other	
	January		June		January		June			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	0	0	0	0	45	92	0	0	4	8
Large City	6	16	10	26	14	37	5	13	3	8
Small City	9	15	8	13	34	56	7	11	3	5
Village/Suburb	20	7	75	26	151	53	21	7	20	7
Rural	14	4	56	16	217	62	52	15	9	3
Nonpublic										
New York City	4	3	1	1	105	78	12	9	13	10
Other	15	9	3	2	132	78	14	8	5	3

Table 16

Use of January and June Examination Periods

Type of School and Community	January Main Period		June Main Period		January Only Period		June Only Period		All Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public										
New York City	42	86	0	0	4	8	1	2	2	4
Large City	23	61	12	32	0	0	1	3	2	5
Small City	40	66	16	26	0	0	1	2	4	7
Village/Suburb	170	59	94	33	0	0	3	1	20	7
Rural	215	62	102	29	11	3	11	3	9	3
Nonpublic										
New York City	69	51	3	2	43	32	11	8	9	7
Other	96	57	7	4	49	29	10	6	7	4

diploma. Many will show 17 or 18 units on their BEDS reports, but the extra units are usually assigned to physical education and do not reflect something above the 16-unit minimum. Many high schools require a unit of mathematics or the fourth year of social studies, but in practically all of these situations, these units are subtracted from the number of elective courses a student may choose, and the basic 16-unit minimum still pertains.

Those handicapped students who are excused from taking the basic competency tests because of their intellectual inability to attain the basic competency level presently receive "general" diplomas or certificates of attendance, accomplishment, or achievement. Such certificates are in lieu of but not equated with the high school diploma and are granted to students who have completed their twenty-first birthday or who have successfully completed an educational program suited to their individual needs and capabilities. The name, and actual awarding of the diploma varies considerably in districts throughout the State. The basic factor common among all districts appears to be a recognition of the attainment of the individual's maximum level of achievement, either vocationally or academically, and the cooperation with the parent in determining the chronological age at which the certificate is granted.

Reactions and Comments

This section of the report summarizes the views of chief school administrators and high school principals on the basic competency testing program. It includes reactions to the difficulty level and other characteristics of the tests themselves, reactions to the program, and suggestions for change.

The survey form asked for an opinion on the appropriateness of the achievement standard established by the basic competency tests as a whole. As indicated in Tables 17 and 18, 59 percent of the chief school administrators and 63 percent of the high school principals responding to the survey feel that the standard is too low; the others, with few exceptions, feel that it is appropriate. City superintendents, other than New York City, and principals in the large city community type had the highest percentages of respondents who believe that the standard is appropriate, but for no group did the percentage exceed 50.

The questions on the basic competency tests measure skills and knowledge in an adult context or setting. Chief school administrators and high school principals were asked if this should be continued or if the tests should measure skills and knowledge in a school context. Tables 19 and 20 reveal a strong preference for continued use of an adult context, as used in other tests of "life skills" or "coping skills." Seventy-eight percent of all respondents favor this approach.

Table 17

Views of Chief School Administrators on the Appropriateness of the Basic Competency Tests as a Minimum Standard for Graduation from High School

Type of School and Community	Appropriate		Too Low		Too High	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
New York City	0	0	1	100	0	0
Large City	3	50	3	50	0	0
Small City	24	47	27	53	0	0
Village/Suburb	107	42	150	58	0	0
Rural	131	40	200	60	1	*
Total	265	41	381	59	1	*

Table 18

Views of High School Principals on the Appropriateness of Basic Competency Tests as a Minimum Standard for Graduation from High School

Type of School and Community	Appropriate		Too Low		Too High	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public						
New York City	12	25	37	75	0	0
Large City	19	50	19	50	0	0
Small City	23	38	38	62	0	0
Village/Suburb	113	39	173	60	1	*
Rural	155	45	193	55	0	0
Total Public	322	41	460	59	1	*
Nonpublic						
New York City	29	21	103	76	3	2
Other	47	28	121	72	1	1
Total Nonpublic	76	25	224	74	4	1
COMBINED TOTAL	398	37	684	63	5	*

*less than .5

Table 19

Views of Chief School Administrators on the Preferred Context -- Adult or School -- for Measurement of Basic Skills and Knowledge

Type of School and Community	Adult Context		School Context	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
New York City	0	0	1	100
Large City	5	83	1	17
Small City	40	78	11	22
Village/Suburb	197	77	60	23
Rural	262	79	70	21
Total	504	78	143	22

Table 20

Views of High School Principals on the Preferred Context -- Adult or School -- for Measurement of Basic Skills and Knowledge

Type of School and Community	Adult Context		School Context	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public				
New York City	35	71	14	29
Large City	36	95	2	5
Small City	48	79	13	21
Village/Suburb	217	76	70	24
Rural	294	84	54	16
Total Public	630	80	153	20
Nonpublic				
New York City	89	66	46	34
Other	131	78	38	22
Total Nonpublic	220	72	84	28
COMBINED TOTAL	850	78	237	22

Tables 21 and 22 show that 61 percent of the chief school administrators and high school principals believe that scores obtained on certain other examinations should be accepted as meeting the test requirement for a diploma in lieu of passing the basic competency tests. About one-half of the respondents would accept passing scores on selected Regents examinations, and about 40 percent would accept passing scores on the statewide achievement examinations (Table 23). Scores obtained on commercially-published tests or on the Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) tests are acceptable to a relatively small percentage of respondents.

The last section on each survey form asked the chief school administrators and high school principals for their reactions and comments and for suggested changes in the basic competency testing program. The responses dealt with all aspects of the program, and both sides of every issue had its share of supporters. Still, there were several major themes that were repeated by a substantial number of respondents.

The concept of a statewide minimum standard for high school graduation was endorsed by many superintendents and principals, but most feel that this standard must be higher than the standard imposed by the current tests. There is general support for continuing the program in its present form for several years in order to properly evaluate its impact and make appropriate modifications. However, many respondents feel that the Department must make a greater effort to publicize the purpose and nature of the program and the fact that the tests are not the only criterion for high school graduation.

Table 21

Views of Chief School Administrators on the Desirability of Accepting Other Test Scores in Lieu of Basic Competency Test Scores

Type of School and Community	Accept		Do Not Accept	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
New York City	0	0	1	100
Large City	4	67	2	33
Small City	34	67	17	33
Village/Suburb	180	70	77	30
Rural	177	53	155	47
Total	395	61	252	39

Table 22

Views of High School Principals on the Desirability of Accepting Other Test Scores in Lieu of Basic Competency Test Scores

Type of School and Community	Accept		Do Not Accept	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public				
New York City	46	94	3	6
Large City	23	61	15	39
Small City	37	61	24	39
Village/Suburb	172	60	115	40
Rural	176	51	172	49
Total Public	454	58	328	42
Nonpublic				
New York City	103	76	32	24
Other	110	65	59	35
Total Nonpublic	213	70	91	30
COMBINED TOTAL	667	61	419	39

Table 23

Views of Chief School Administrators and High School Principals on Types of Test Scores Acceptable in Lieu of Basic Competency Test Scores

Types of Test Scores	Considered Acceptable By			
	Ch. School Admin.		H. S. Principals	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Regents Examination	341	53	541	50
Statewide Achievement Examination	280	43	408	38
PEP Test	158	24	192	18
Commercial Test	187	29	320	29
Local Test	37	6	88	8
All Other	16	2	21	2

There is considerable interest in limiting the program to the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. It is generally felt that the tests in civics and citizenship and in practical sciences and health require a higher level of reading ability than the reading test and are not tied closely enough to the Department-recommended courses of study. Many respondents suggested that the Department publish lists of objectives and other curriculum materials in all five areas tested.

The test in writing skills received the most criticism because it is a difficult test to rate. Many suggested the use of objective questions and a brief writing sample.

Two other comments appeared on a large number of the survey forms. The high school principals are particularly unhappy with the scheduling of the tests. Many urged that the tests not be given during the Regents examination periods because of the administrative problem that this creates, while others simply asked for greater scheduling flexibility. Finally, a sizable number of respondents feel that selected students should be exempted from the basic competency testing requirement because of handicapping conditions.

APPENDIX

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12234

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR
ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY
AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

March 6, 1978

TO: Chief School Administrators and Principals of Nonpublic Schools

FROM: John Polley, Acting Deputy Commissioner

SUBJECT: Collection of Information on Results of the Basic Competency Testing Program

The Department and the Regents must complete final regulations on the basic competency testing program this spring. In order to help shape these regulations, the Department needs information on the current status of pupils with respect to the basic competency requirements and the effects of present tests and requirements upon instruction and pupil achievement. In the near future, therefore, we shall distribute a survey form to collect this information. I am writing in advance of that distribution to ask for your special cooperation with this effort.

On the survey form, all high school principals will be asked to report on the record of students enrolled in grades 10 and 11 with respect to the number passing or failing each of the Basic Competency Tests. The form will also solicit information on the major reasons for student failure, on remedial programs and activities, and on testing policies. The form will provide space for comments and suggestions which you and the high school principals may wish to make on the program.

Our timetable requires return of the completed survey forms in the Department by March 31. We are now making special arrangements for their distribution and collection. For all public school districts, except those in large cities (New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers), the forms will be distributed by District Superintendents to Chief School Administrators. These Administrators are then requested to distribute and collect them from their high school principals and return them to the District Superintendents. In the large city districts, the Department staff will work directly with the Chief School Administrators. For all nonpublic high schools, the distribution and collection will be conducted by direct mailing to the high schools. The District Superintendents will be thoroughly familiar with the data collection procedure and will provide assistance to all Chief School Administrators and principals who require their help.

We recognize that this project can succeed only with the full understanding and cooperation of Chief School Administrators and principals throughout the State. I emphasize strongly the value of the information you will provide in helping the Regents and the Department develop sound regulations based on informed judgments. Your cooperation is appreciated deeply.

Information copies to:

District Superintendents
Diocesan Superintendents

John W Polley

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Information Center on Education
Albany, New York 12234

BASIC COMPETENCY TEST SURVEY

REACTIONS AND COMMENTS OF CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

1. Students who pass the five basic competency tests demonstrate that they have reached or surpassed a certain level of achievement in the outcomes measured by the tests. Do you feel that this level is appropriate as a minimum standard for graduation from high school?

   (1) ☐ Yes

   (2) ☐ No; it is too low.

   (3) ☐ No; it is too high.

2. In their present form, the basic competency tests are designed to measure skills and knowledge in an adult context rather than in a school context. Which approach do you favor?

   (1) ☐ Continued use of an adult context.

   (2) ☐ Change to a school context.

3. Do you feel that scores obtained on certain other examinations should be accepted as meeting the test requirement for a diploma in lieu of passing the basic competency tests?

   (1) ☐ Yes (2) ☐ No

4. If "yes," what types of test scores should be accepted? (Check all that may be appropriate.)

- ☐ Regents examination scores
- ☐ Statewide achievement examination scores
- ☐ PEP test scores
- ☐ Scores obtained on commercially-published tests
- ☐ Other _____

5. Other reactions and comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Suggested changes in the Basic Competency Testing Program: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signed _____
(Chief School Administrator)

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Information Center on Education
Albany, New York 12234

BASIC COMPETENCY TEST SURVEY

Part I: Basic Data

Grade 11

1. Number of students enrolled in grade 11 as of March 1 ..... _____

2. Number of eleventh grade students who have passed the Basic Competency Tests in both Reading and Mathematics ..... _____

3. Number of eleventh grade students who have not yet passed the test in:
   a. Reading..... _____
   b. Mathematics..... _____

Grade 10

1. Number of students enrolled in grade 10 as of March 1 ..... _____

2. Number of tenth grade students who have passed all five of the Basic Competency Tests..... _____

3. Number of tenth grade students who have not yet passed the test in:
   a. Reading..... _____
   b. Mathematics..... _____
   c. Writing Skills..... _____
   d. Civics and Citizenship..... _____
   e. Practical Sciences and Health..... _____

Part II: Supplemental Data

Reasons for Having Not Yet Passed

If you have students who have not yet passed the required tests, complete the table below. Please determine, as accurately as possible, the number of students who have not yet passed the required tests for the reason indicated.

Reason	Number of Students Grade 11	Grade 10
1. Have not taken the tests because they:		
a. Recently moved into New York State.....	_____	_____
b. Were absent on test dates.....	_____	_____
2. Have a native language other than English	_____	_____
3. Have a handicapping condition*.....	_____	_____
a. Physically handicapped.....	_____	_____
b. Mentally handicapped.....	_____	_____
c. Emotionally handicapped.....	_____	_____
d. Learning disabled.....	_____	_____
4. No apparent reason other than failure to acquire the basic competencies.....	_____	_____
5. Other (please specify)		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

*As defined in Section 200.1 of the Commissioner's Regulations.

Remedial Programs

1. Does your school provide any type of special help to students who fail a Basic Competency Test?

(1) ☐ Yes (2) ☐ No

2. If "yes," please check the procedures used to provide this special help.

Procedure	For students who fail the test in: Read.	Math.	Writ. Skills	Civics & Cit.	Pract. Sci. & Health
Students are given remedial help individually or in small groups in their regular classes	___	___	___	___	___
Students attend remedial classes instead of their regular classes	___	___	___	___	___
Students attend remedial classes in addition to their regular classes	___	___	___	___	___
Other (please specify)					
_____	___	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___	___

Testing Policy

1. In what grade and in which month do the majority of students attending your school take the tests for the first time?

(1) ☐ Grade 8, January

(2) ☐ Grade 8, June

(3) ☐ Grade 9, January

(4) ☐ Grade 9, June

( ) ☐ _____

2. Which statement best describes the Basic Competency Testing policy in your school?

(1) ☐ The main testing period is January; June is used for "makeups" and retesting.

(2) ☐ The main testing period is June; January is used for "makeups" and retesting.

(3) ☐ The tests are given only once each year, in January.

(4) ☐ The tests are given only once each year, in June.

( ) ☐ Other (please describe)_____

_____

Part III: Reactions and Comments

1. Students who pass the five basic competency tests demonstrate that they have reached or surpassed a certain level of achievement in the outcomes measured by the tests. Do you feel that this level is appropriate as a minimum standard for graduation from high school?

   (1) ☐ Yes

   (2) ☐ No; it is too low.

   (3) ☐ No; it is too high.

2. In their present form, the basic competency tests are designed to measure skills and knowledge in an adult context rather than in a school context. Which approach do you favor?

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3. Do you feel that scores obtained on certain other examinations should be accepted as meeting the test requirement for a diploma in lieu of passing the basic competency tests?

   (1) ☐ Yes (2) ☐ No

4. If "yes," what types of test scores should be accepted? (Check all that may be appropriate.)

   ☐ Regents examination scores

   ☐ Statewide achievement examination scores

   ☐ PEP test scores

   ☐ Scores obtained on commercially-published tests

   ☐ Other_____

5. Other reactions and comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Suggested changes in the Basic Competency Testing Program: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signatures

Completed by _____
(High School Principal)

Reviewed by _____
(Chief School Administrator)